CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
SANTA MARIA, CALIFORNIA
SPECIAL MEETING

MARCH 15, 2006

CALL TO ORDER:
Mayor Lavagnino called the Special Meeting of the City Council to order at 2:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:
MEMBERS PRESENT
Councilmembers Mariscal, Orach, Patino, Trujillo, and Mayor Lavagnino.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT
City Manager Ness, City Attorney Trujillo, Police Chief Macagni, Director of Community Development Lindsey, Public Works Director/City Engineer Sweet, Principal Engineer Nybo, Senior Civil Engineer Beas, Streets and Facilities Manager Ferrari, Police Commander Elm, Police Sergeant Flores, and Chief Deputy City Clerk Perez.

PUBLIC COMMENT
There were none at this time.

DEMONSTRATION REGARDING AUTOMATED RED LIGHT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM.
Police Sergeant Flores introduced the representatives from Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc., Aaron Rosenberg and Mike Negrette, who provided a demonstration of their red light enforcement program.

Aaron Rosenberg showed a short video of a red light violator causing a traffic accident. He explained that with their system client agencies receive a 12-second, full-motion video of each infraction which becomes very powerful for crash investigation. In 1996, the State legislature authorized photo enforcement within the State of California and was enacted as part of the California Vehicle Code. On January 1, 2004, some amendments became effective with respect to programs. It provided standardization and allows cities to effectively implement a program without a local ordinance. In the City of Ventura they have had a very substantial crash reduction. At their equipped intersections, their crash reduction is between 37 percent and 77 percent. They have actually reduced crashes 19 percent across the entire city. Santa Ana has experienced a 45 percent reduction, and Oxnard has had a 29 percent reduction in crashes at their equipped intersections. Redflex is the largest vendor in the industry with 82 programs across the United States.

Mayor Lavagnino asked if a person ran a red light and caused a traffic accident and then got out of his car and ran, would their equipment take a clear enough picture of the driver to identify him?

Mr. Rosenberg replied that it absolutely would. He stated once an agency decides to contract with Redflex, they typically have the systems installed within four weeks.

Councilmember Orach asked if a system was just one intersection or the whole program.

Mr. Rosenberg explained that a system was an intersection approach, such as a northbound, southbound, eastbound, or westbound approach. Of the 44 programs with cities that they support, there is not a single intersection where all four approaches have systems. Usually, only one or two approaches at an intersection have cameras.

Mayor Lavagnino asked if the City decided to do 10 intersections, how long would it take to put those in?

Mr. Rosenberg explained there were some dependencies outside of their control. The primary dependency was how quick they could work with the Public Works Department

and Engineering to get the drawings approved and permits issued. The physical installation would not take long.

Councilmember Orach asked if their signs at the intersections were bilingual.

Mr. Rosenberg replied that the signs were not bilingual; however, they were very graphic in nature and done to a Caltrans standard. They had not been challenged on the signs. Many of their citations were bilingual as well as the instructions for how to handle the citations. He went on to describe what the hardware looked like at the intersections. There were four cameras in each housing, three high resolution still cameras and one full-motion video camera which are set up to do multiple lanes and multiple movement with a synchronized time stamp. Two things have to occur for the system to work: 1) it has to be a red signal phase; and 2) there has to be a vehicle to violate so there is a presence detector. He explained how the system worked, how the citations were generated, and how the City Police Department reviewed the citations and either accepted or rejected the citations based on the photographs. If accepted, Redflex would send out the citation which included copies of the photographs. They would also upload the citation to the court.

Mayor Lavagnino asked how quickly the citation reached the driver through the mail.

Mr. Rosenberg stated in California, it had to be received within 15 days of the violation. He said when a new system is installed, they do a lot of public outreach including putting notices in water bills, installing signs at the intersections and major city entrances, press releases and press conferences. One of the statutory requirements is that the City Council hold a public hearing prior to execution of the contract. Some cities have done community forums in addition to the public hearing. They have had about 75 percent public approval of the programs. As of January 1, 2004, one of the changes to State law was that cities could no longer contract with vendors on a per citation basis. As a result, Redflex moved to a fixed fee per system. To clear that fixed fee, you need about two citations per day. Redflex evaluates what the receivables are to a city on a monthly basis; and if it is below their fixed fee, the city doesn't pay the balance. If the receivables were above the fixed fee, that was all surplus to the city. The fixed fee consisted of a full turnkey lease of all hardware, all software, all construction services, and all maintenance, all citation processing, all training, all data base management, all court support, and expert witnesses.

Councilmember Patino asked about unregistered vehicles.

Mr. Rosenberg stated if they ran a DMV check and the vehicle came back unregistered, there was nothing they could do. Police Departments could do further follow-up. For example, sometimes they would get gender mismatches where the vehicle is registered to a male but a female is driving in the photographs. The Police Department could pull up the list of drivers at that address, pull up the DMV image file, identify the female driver, and issue the citation to the right person.

Councilmember Patino asked Director of Public Works/City Engineer Sweet how long the yellow light sequence lasted.

Director Sweet explained that it depended on the intersection, but it was anywhere from four to six seconds.

Councilmember Mariscal asked what the City could expect from a longitudinal study.

Mr. Rosenberg stated what they found from a longitudinal prospective was that you got an immediate decline when the signs go up and the system is implemented, then it would level out after a while. You would probably see about a 40 percent decline in violations. The other thing was State law required a 30-day warning period before citations were issued. The signs go up and violators were sent a warning letter for the first 30 days.

Councilmember Mariscal asked about the benefits of rotating the cameras to different intersections.

Mr. Rosenberg stated they do their homework before the system goes in and they recommend putting the cameras at the intersections where the most violations and crashes are occurring. When the system is installed, it is the infrastructure construction that is the large part of the cost, not the cameras, so it was not cost-effective to rotate the cameras. People know when the cameras get moved.

Councilmember Mariscal indicated that people he had talked to were concerned about an increase in rear-end crashes because drivers would stop suddenly.

Mr. Rosenberg responded rear-end crashes were caused by speed and inattention. After contacting other agencies with the red light enforcement system in place, he found that there was not a significant increase in rear-end collisions.

Councilmember Mariscal asked if their triggering mechanisms for the cameras were affected by fog and moisture related climates.

Mr. Rosenberg explained they had four different trigger devices they used. Each one had good points and bad points. They do engineering and select the right device for the area.

Councilmember Mariscal asked if the City decided to move forward and have a system like this installed, what City resources would be needed.

Police Chief Macagni stated the Police Department was already addressing that in the 2006-07 budget proposal. They were requesting a provisional officer position (most likely a retired sworn officer) to staff this. It would be a sworn officer so they could testify in court.

Councilmember Mariscal asked what the learning curve was for training on the system.

Mr. Rosenberg explained that they provided the training. Some cities use light duty officers to man the system. Training was usually quick; however, they preferred that not too many people were trained on the system.

Councilmember Mariscal stated he had been a champion of a red light enforcement system for a long time.

Mayor Lavagnino asked for comments from the public. There was none.

City Manager Ness informed the Council that they would not be taking any action at this time. Staff will be bringing back a recommendation to the Council at a later time. He said he understood Mr. Rosenberg to say that it would be the City who determined where systems would be installed.

Mr. Rosenberg stated they like to make it a mutual decision. They have a lot of best practices that they like to provide. Crash history and violation history are things they want to look at. It would ultimately be the City's decision.

City Manager Ness asked if they had any idea after looking around the City of how many systems might be good for Santa Maria.

Mr. Rosenberg indicated it was a difficult question to answer. There were a couple of general rules of thumb about that. You don't want to start with a "big bang." You want to have a learning curve and make sure everything was working out. It is a fluid process. They could start with four systems and keep evaluating other intersections. They could add additional systems rather quickly.

City Manager Ness asked if it was best to do at least two approaches at an intersection.

Mr. Rosenberg replied it was fairly common to have two approaches at an intersection. They are usually parallel in the high traffic direction. If they install a system and it doesn't seem to be working, they could move that system to another location.

City Manager Ness explained that two of the City's major thoroughfares were Broadway and Main Street which were State highways. He asked what experience they had had working with Caltrans.

Mr. Rosenberg stated every Caltrans district was unique. In various districts, they did have systems. There was a process they had to go through. Sometimes, cities had a good relationship with their Caltrans district, and that helped a lot. When he talked about 30 days for installation, it would not be a Caltrans intersection. He recommended starting with City-maintained intersections while they worked with Caltrans.

Mayor Lavagnino asked if the Police Department already had an idea of what intersections they would like to use.

Chief Macagni explained they have reviewed their high incident crash locations and where people run the red lights frequently.

Sergeant Flores stated some of the top ten intersections for 2005 were Betteravia/Miller, Broadway/Battles, Broadway/Carmen, Broadway/Alvin, Broadway/Main, Broadway/ Betteravia, Broadway/Stowell, and Blosser/Alvin.

Councilmember Patino asked how long the permitting would take.

Director of Public Works/City Engineer Sweet replied it would probably be somewhere between 30 and 60 days for the initial system. He said they had to be really sure for court that the installation of the cameras did not affect the function of the traffic signals. There is a routine that has to be gone through to verify that. For Caltrans intersections, it would probably take at least six months.

City Manager Ness indicated that the City had recently installed a synchronization system on the two State highways for the Fire Department. He asked if a car was just getting out of the way of a fire truck, would that be considered a violation?

Mr. Rosenberg stated that might be an issuance criteria that they screen or one that an officer would not approve. The video allows you to take all those things into consideration.

There were no further questions.

Council thanked the representatives for the information presentation.

ADJOURNMENT
There being no further business to come before the City Council at this time, the meeting was declared adjourned at 3:40 p.m. by order of Mayor Lavagnino to the regular City Council meeting of Tuesday, March 21, 2006.

APPROVED

4-4-06
Date

Chief Deputy City Clerk of the City of Santa Maria and ex officio Clerk of the City Council

Mayor of the City of Santa Maria

ATTEST

Chief Deputy City Clerk